SUBJECT

Relations between Greece and Egypt. Treaties, general.

DATE

3/10/30

CASE NUMBER

768.83

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respecting any questions involving Greek relations. I think the actual purpose of Mr. Michalakopoulos' absence must be sought elsewhere, and I am of the opinion that it is nothing else than his desire to combat the idea of the adoption of Egyptian nationality by the Greeks residing in Egypt, by arousing, as a result of his presence and his speeches, a patriotic fervor for Hellenism. It seems that the Patriarch Meletios of the Orthodox Church has rather favored the adoption of Egyptian nationality by the faithful as likely to assist them in the carrying on of their affairs, and as highly suitable in any event, since for generations many of them have been making their homes in Egypt, where all their material interests are located. The Hellenic Government, on the other hand, objects strongly to any weakening of the ties which bind Greeks to the home-land, as we have every reason to know from the attitude which it assumes with respect to the naturalization of Greeks in the United States. Greek militarists, furthermore, pretend to believe (quite wrongly in my opinion), that Greeks residing in Egypt can be counted upon for army purposes in case of necessity. Then there is the hope that absent Greeks more and more will be disposed to remit their balances to Athens, following in this respect the example of many Greeks who reside in the United States.

While nothing is being said publicly about the underlying reason as given above for the visit of the Foreign Minister to Egypt, considerable attention is devoted to other reasons, of which the following are the principal:

The Egyptian Government abolished its general customs tariff some time ago, and put into effect a special tariff, more or less on trial, for a period of six months. Until this new tariff

became operative, Greece enjoyed an arrangement with Egypt under which Greek tobacco was admitted on lower terms than Near Eastern tobacco generally. This advantage disappeared with the adoption of the present tariff, and Mr. Michalakopoulos is now said to have obtained assurances that measures will be taken to restore the privileged position of Greek tobacco. As to this, we shall see.

There is also complaint in Greece that Egypt will not admit Greek wines of higher alcoholic content than 13 degrees, whereas it is claimed that Greek wines of lower degree than 15 will not stand transportation.

Finally, there is the question of the capitulations. This matter, it is stated, is to be regulated upon the basis of the principle that the interested powers will not consent to abrogation of the capitulations without having first obtained positive guarantee that the interests of foreigners in Egypt will be protected in some other fashion.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

Robert P. Skinner.

RPS/cwf

here, Mr. Metaxas, that an additional category of Greeks is about to be recognized by the Egyptian authorities, to wit: Greek Cypriotes and certain classes of Greeks who have come here from ancient Turkey. Some of the details of establishing their nationality, however, I understand, are still to be worked out.

The official view as to the retention of Greek nationality by Greeks in Egypt has not been shared by the Patriarch Meletios, of the Orthodox Church, who, he alleges, with a view to obviating some of the difficulties which he himself anticipates, should the Capitulations be abolished, has been in general in favor of the adoption by some categories of Greeks residing in Egypt of Egyptian nationality. The Patriarch Meletios may also have been influenced in this view by the fact that he himself when elected adopted, as he had to, Egyptian nationality and came to Egypt under an Egyptian passport. The same applies to the Grand Rabbi Nahoum. I gather that the conversations held with Monsieur Michalakopoulos during his visit here will tend to discourage Greeks residing in Egypt from adopting Egyptian nationality, though I do not gather from what I have heard that the Patriarch Meletios has been won over to the official school of thought in this regard.

Greek negotiations in respect of the new Egyptian customs tariff present some interesting features due, for instance, to the fact that the former tariff accorded a twenty percent de facto preferential to Greek tobacco, and likewise to Bulgarian and Turkish tobaccos, over Far Eastern tobacco, due to the fact that China and Japan did not have commercial treaties with Egypt. Turkey and Bulgaria have perhaps in the past benefitted from this circumstance even more than Greece. Some similar arrangement will probably be arrived at in respect of the new tariff as, though vigorous efforts are now being made to grow tobacco in Egypt, there is a feeling here that the inferior grades of

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DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

768.83/3

SEE 868.404/31 FOR #288

FROM Greece (MacVeagh) DATED June23, 1934

TO NAME

1-1127 GPO

REGARDING:

Gift of a plot of land to the Egyptian Government for the building of a mosque.

Informs of introduction of a bill in Parliament for the -.Comments on reasons for the gift.

3

Wi

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 883.05/537 FOR #637

FROM Alexandria (Russell) DATED March 23,1935

TO NAME 1—1127 ...

768.83/4

REGARDING: Greek-Egyptian relations.
Controversy between the two governments concerning the officer and five of the crew on the S.S. KERKIRA which was seized, at the request of Greek authorities, by the Egyptian authorities. Egyptian authorities considered these men to be political refugees and refused to turn them over to Greek authorities.

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LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Athens, July 20, 1939.

No. 3229.

Subject: Visit of the Egyptian Foreign Minister.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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ASSISTANT SECRETARY
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768.83/5

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that Abdel Fattah Yehia Pasha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, has been in Athens for several days on an official visit, terminating the official tour of Balkan capitals which he has been making during the past month.

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Yehia Pasha arrived here from Belgrade on the morning of July 11th and remained until the morning of the 15th, when he returned to Egypt. He was accompanied by Badaoui Pasha, President of the Council of State, Hassouna Bey, Director of the Foreign Office, and Hussein Aziz, his private secretary. They were met at the train by the usual

usual delegation of Greek officials, including the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Greek Minister at Cairo, and senior employees of the Foreign Office, by the Ministers at Athens of the Balkan countries included in his tour, and by the officers of the Greco-Egyptian League in this city. On the occasion of their departure the delegation included also the Greek Prime Minister.

During his stay Yehia Pasha had several conversations with Mr. Metaxas and was intensively though quietly put through a round of official and semi-official entertain-
1/ ment (see the enclosed program of the visit), featured by a luncheon with the Crown Prince and Princess and a dinner offered by the Premier at which friendly and orientally graceful toasts were exchanged between host and guest,
2/ translations of which I enclose. The Department will note that in his welcome, Mr. Metaxas took the opportunity to emphasize the interest of this country in the welfare of the large Greek population in Egypt; while in his reply, the distinguished Egyptian emphasized the interest of both countries in the maintenance of peace in the Mediterranean in terms which could only refer to the Anglo-Franco-Turkish anti-aggression front.

On the eve of Yehia Pasha's departure a communiqué was issued to the press, which I translate from the semi-official Messager d'Athènes of July 15, 1939:

> During the visit that His Excellency Abdel Fattah Yehia Pasha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, made to Athens from the 11th to the 15th of this month, he was received by H.R.H. the Crown Prince and had several meetings with His Excellency the President of the Council of Ministers, Mr. J. Metaxas. These meetings, marked by the greatest cordiality, have confirmed the traditional friendship uniting Egypt and Greece, as well as their mutual desire to pursue their confident collaboration with a view to the ever greater development of their cultural and economic relations.

Here again will be noted the careful avoidance of any mention of possible political considerations in connection with the visit of Yehia Pasha, in line with the policy of extreme caution being followed by the Greek Government. And, indeed, local diplomatic and foreign office sources agree that there were no political arrangements or understandings either contemplated or discussed. However, times being as they are, Greek and Egyptian statesmen would find it hard to talk intermittently over a period of several days without mentioning the present European line-up of powers. The position of Egypt is clearer than that of Greece, but the only immediate fear that either has of aggression is named "Italy", and it would be surprising if Yehia Pasha did not receive considerable informal reassurance that Greece fully realizes that her long-run interests lie with Turkey and the rest of the anti-aggression front. A story ran about Athens for a few days to the effect that Greece would join in an alliance with Egypt, Turkey, France(Syria), and Britain (Palestine) to control the Eastern Mediterranean, but it has been scornfully denied by Foreign Office sources. It might be said that a tacit alliance of these latter countries actually exists, in practice, and that Greece is necessarily close to being involved through her alliance with Turkey. But she is in the most vulnerable position of the countries mentioned, and for her to invite the wrath of Italy and the Axis cohorts by any formal commitments to the other side would manifestly be a foolish move at this time.

However, Greece is always concerned about the welfare of the Greeks in Egypt, who are an unexhausted source of wealth, and in the past few years has been increasingly

concerned

concerned about her exportations to that country, which have been unable, in the words of the weekly OECONOMOLOGOS ATHINON, to compete with the intensive exploitation of the unrestricted Egyptian market by "the States which by various methods, are seeking to acquire free foreign exchange to cover their needs". Consequently the visit of the Egyptian Foreign Minister was definitely welcome to his hosts, and they profited by the opportunity to talk to him on these subjects, with results, if any, as yet undisclosed.

With respect to the entire tour of Yehia Pasha, local observers are in general agreement with the view expressed to Mr. Kohler by the Turkish Minister and First Secretary here, who say that his visit to Ankara was intended to counteract the propaganda broadcast from the Italian radio stations alleging trouble in Islam, and particularly divergencies in the points of view of Turkey and Egypt; while the rest of the Minister's journey was simply a pleasure and good-will trip calculated to keep him away from the heat of the Egyptian summer as long as possible.

Respectfully yours,

Leslie E. Reed,
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Enclosures:
1. Copy of Program of Visit.
2. Translation of Exchange of Toasts.

Copy to American Legation, Cairo.

File No. 800.

FDK/pe

Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 3229 of July 20, 1939, from American Legation, Athens, Greece, on the subject of the Egyptian Foreign Minister's Visit to Athens.

PROGRAM OF THE VISIT TO ATHENS

OF

ABDEL FATTAH YEHIA PASHA,

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF EGYPT.

- - -

July 11 - A.M. Arrival from Belgrade, 10:30 a.m.
Received by
N. Mavroudis, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
Mr. Androulis, Chief Secretary of the Premier.
Mr. Capsalis, Greek Minister at Cairo.
The Minister of Egypt and personnel of the Legation.
The Ministers of Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria.
Messrs. Benakis and Petridis, President and Secretary of the Greco-Egyptian League.

2. Inscription at the Palace.

3. Exchange of visits with Mr. Metaxas.

P.M. 4. Luncheon at the Egyptian Legation.

5. Visit to the Acropolis.

6. Official dinner offered by the Greek Government, followed by a reception.

July 12 - A.M.

7. Laying of wreath on Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

P.M. 8. Luncheon offered by Crown Prince Paul and Princess Frederika.

9. Visit to the Athens Museums.

10. Dinner offered by Mr. Cotzias, Minister-Governor of Attica.

July 13-P.M. 11. Luncheon offered by the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Madam Mavroudis.

12. Excursion to Marathon.

13. Tea offered by the Premier and Madam Metaxas.

14. Dinner at the Egyptian Legation, followed by a reception.

July 14 -

July 14 - P.M.	15.	Luncheon offered by Mr. Benaki, President of the Greco-Egyptian League.
	16.	Private dinner at the Egyptian Legation.
July 15 - A.M.	17.	Departed from Piraeus at 11:00. Seen off by Mr. Metaxas and the receiving delegation.

Enclosure No. 2 to Despatch No. 3229 of July 20, 1939, from American Legation, Athens, Greece, on the subject of the Egyptian Foreign Minister's Visit to Athens.

TRANSLATION.

SOURCE: Messager d'Athènes, July 12, 1939.

TOAST OF MR. METAXAS.

Mr. Minister:

It is with the most lively joy that, in the name of the Royal Government and of the Greek people I welcome you to Athens and, at the same time, address to the noble Egyptian nation, our friend, the cordial greetings of Greece.

Your presence amongst us is a confirmation of the age-old friendship which unites us so closely--a friendship founded on mutual understanding between our peoples and on their long and fruitful collaboration, whose happy development has created the most confident relations between our two countries.

Depositories of great pasts, proud of their ancient civilizations, homes of wisdom, of light and of beauty, whose eternal brilliance will not cease to enlighten the thought of the modern world, guardians of this great heritage, Egypt and Greece, always faithful to themselves as well as to their ideal of progress, are conscious of the high mission that they are called upon to fulfill in the work of peaceful collaboration between all peoples who take part in international life.

Bathed by this Mediterranean, which unites rather than separates them, our two countries have since ancient times enjoyed cultural and economic relations which have been maintained across the centuries and which it is our common desire to see always further developed.

I am firmly convinced that your visit to Athens will contribute thereto in a very large measure.

One unshakeable tie singularly unites our two countries: the important Greek population living on the hospitable soil of Egypt. Enjoying an administration which does great honor to you, since it is inspired by the highest principles of liberty and justice, the Greek element in Egypt has won your confidence and your friendship by its labor, its spirit of discipline and its sincere attachment to your country, which it has made its second fatherland.

I am happy for the opportunity which is given me to address to the Egyptian Government my most sincere thanks for its solicitude as well as for the invaluable support which it has never failed to grant to the numerous Greek communities of Egypt, which by their activity constitute a factor of order and progress, and which most sincerely desire to contribute to the further strengthening of the relations of confident friendship which so happily unite our two countries.

I desire

I desire, at the same time, here to express my profound admiration for the remarkable progress accomplished by Egypt in all domains, a progress worthy of its great past, which rejoices no one more than Greece.

There is still another tie which unites us closely, a spiritual tie, which is our profound attachment to the ideal of peace. We refuse, in fact, to admit for a single moment that the grave problems which in this hour are causing so much anxiety cannot be settled without having the world drawn into a catastrophe which all people view with horror.

It is this sentiment which strengthens us in our firm will to continue to devote all our efforts to the service of peace; for we hold deeply the faith that the desire for understanding, for concord and for peaceful collaboration will definitely triumph over hatred and the war spirit.

I raise my glass to the health of His Majesty King Farouk, to the grandeur and prosperity of the noble Egyptian nation. I drink to your health, Mr. Minister.

* * * * *

RESPONSE OF YEHIA PASHA

Mr. President:

I am deeply touched by your cordial reception and by the friendly wishes which you addressed to my August Sovereign, to the people of Egypt and to myself. You have done so with a delicacy worthy of a son of the lovable Hellas.

From your harmonious shores ancient Greece gave to the world a civilization in which art and philosophy contributed to the creation of a gentleness of life, a sense of proportion, a charming grace which have made easy the relations between men.

On its part Egypt had for a long time given to the peoples who did not yet live a socialized life the example of a civilization whose lessons have left their mark on the best of real human values.

These great historical movements were intermingled and have created between our two countries the powerful ties and common memories of which the Ptolemaic period and the foundation of Alexandria remain the most striking and the most characteristic examples.

With few exceptions, other ties of sentiment and interest have never lacked, through the ages, to strengthen a friendship already centuries old. We have only the more reason to maintain this friendship, since it is at the base of a Mediterranean policy conceived for the soul idea of peace. All of us Mediterraneans have the sacred duty to attach ourselves to the maintenance of this peace which alone can assure security and happiness to all.

Permit

Permit me to tell you, Mr. President, how much Egypt appreciates the collaboration of the Greeks established on her soil. Intelligent and active, your compatriots have taken a place in Egyptian life, and they constantly set the example for a happy and fruitful collaboration.

Egypt does not forget, furthermore, that on Greek soil at Kavalla you have raised to the glory of the Chief of her Royal Dynasty a monument which perpetuates his illustrious memory. This gesture went directly to the heart of the late King, the great Fouad, whose illness prevented him from inaugurating this monument to his ancestor. He had wished to express to you officially his gratitude. We do it today with the greatest will, with a voice less authorized certainly, but with an emotion no less sincere, pending the day when His Majesty King Farouk the First will be able to do so himself.

I raise my glass to the health of His Majesty King George II, to the prosperity of eternal Greece, and to the happiness of her people, and drink to your health, Mr. President, and to that of the gracious Madame Metaxas.

FDK/pe

Central File: Decimal File 768.83, Political Relations Of States, Relations; Bi-Lateral Treaties., Greece And Egypt, March 10, 1930 - July 20, 1939. March 10, 1930 - July 20, 1939. MS Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States: Records of the U.S. Department of State, 1930-1944: Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations of Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States, 1930-1939. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5111391752%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC. Accessed 21 June 2025.